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Gray, Howard Alexander
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THE MIND

OF

AMERICA

BY

HOWARD A. GRAY.

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The Mind of America

By HOWARD A. GRAY.

America puzzled us sometimes when she was a neutral, and there are people who still find her puzzling as an Ally. Indeed, the more strenuously she takes up the war, the greater is the apparent contrast between her prolonged inaction and her present energy. After keeping the peace towards Germany for nearly three years under the gravest assaults both on her national dignity and her humane instincts, she suddenly takes her place with the most stalwart of Germany's enemies in attitude and with the most vigorous in preparation. This is extremely gratifying to those who are already at grips with the Hun, but it is very natural that some of them should not be quite sure what to make of it.

The Paradox.

"The zeal of the convert" is proverbial, but it is not always permanent. Is this rapid transformation of America to be depended on "for the duration of the war"? Is it the outcome of a restless and impulsive disposition that swings from one extreme to another and "blows hot" to-day, only to "blow cold" to-morrow? Will America's "war fever" run its course and then leave her to relapse into pacifism, perhaps at some inconvenient moment when we are relying on her help to complete the last stages of victory? It is a very legitimate question, and it admits, happily, as will be seen, of a very convincing answer.

We shall have to begin with a statement even more paradoxical than the contrast between the pacific America of twelve months ago and the bellicose America of to-day, and that is that her pacifism and her bellicosity are the same thing. Her war spirit is simply her peace spirit, illuminated and intensified by experience. President

Wilson said in his address to the Federation of Labour at Buffalo:—

> "I am opposed, not to the feeling of the Pacifists, but to their stupidity. Pacifists do not know how to get peace, but I do."

Pacifism at War.

The master-key to the American riddle lies in those words. The primary force and driving-power in all America's war-making is the overwhelming—if you like, the fanatical—devotion of her people to the cause of peace. That emotion is just as strong to-day as when she restrained herself under one German outrage after another and re-elected her President as the man who had "kept America out of the war." It is not her principles that have altered, but only her knowledge of the facts to which they apply. What has affected her is the making of a startling discovery. While she cherished the blessings of peace, she had always believed that their enjoyment belonged to her in perfect security. She was far away from the slumbering volcanoes of the Old World, and three thousand miles of ocean lay between her and the rivalries and ambitions of European politics. When it came home to her that there was actually a Power in existence at once so malign and so far-reaching that it could force her into a great war as the only alternative to shame and subjection, it gave an astounding shock to her whole philosophy. It showed that her imagined safety was a delusion, and that peace could never be the "sure thing" that she had supposed it, until the means of breaking it had been utterly wrested from Germany's grasp.

Unless we appreciate the confidence with which America regarded peace both as a right and as a possession, we cannot possibly understand how she was staggered when, as the President of Cornell University puts it, "the scales fell from our eyes." What she saw then was a challenge thrown down by Germany to one of the most fundamental conditions of her life. And when she had looked the amazing, incredible fact in the face, what she felt was that so monstrous a denial of what she had always taken for granted must not only be repelled, but made impossible of repetition. She had been mistaken

in thinking that peace was safe in the past. Well, there should be no mistake about its being safe for the future. Since she had to fight, she would take care that she had only to fight once.

It was clearly a formidable as well as an evil power that could stretch a hand all the way from Berlin across the Atlantic and pull her unoffending nose and snap its brutal fingers in her face. It must be made the last time that sort of thing could happen. And since Germany was shown to build all her hopes on war just as persistently as America built hers on peace, it was plain that nothing but the "knocking out" of Germany would make peace the certainty which America had always imagined it was and which she was determined that in future it should be. Between the American devotion to peace and the German spirit of aggression there can only be a fight to a finish. There is no splitting of differences between peace and no peace. You are either safe or unsafe, and since America means to be safe, it follows that the danger must be not only averted, but exterminated. The President puts this plainly enough when he says:—

> "Any body of free men that compounds with the present German Government is compounding for its own destruction."

Hence the determination not to spare men, money or work; hence the immediate resort to conscription, the mobilising of industry, agriculture and economy, the giant programmes of shipbuilding and aviation, the readiness and eagerness to put America's whole resources at the service of the nations whom she sees fighting for the victory of her own cause.

So that America does not in the least contradict herself. Her combatant energy only proves the sincerity of her pacifism. It is the same force which kept her so long neutral that now makes her the most resolute of belligerents. Germany made Peace the highway to War. America makes War the road to Peace, and intends that the journey shall be final. She hates the route as much as ever she did, and she means to ensure that no one shall ever be able to make her travel it again. ONCE only.

Thus, from the moment that America entered the war, the very reasons which had so far kept her out of it became a guarantee that she would fight to the end. But, as soon as she had taken her decision, another force came into play that equally forbade her to be content with anything but full victory. Not only was her own prestige now at stake, but that of the whole idea of democracy, which is the life and breath of her existence.

We can scarcely realise what it means to an American when he hears from his President that "the world must be made safe for Democracy." We have not the passion for abstract ideas in this country. But America's whole faith and self-confidence are built upon the principle of self-government. She looks upon herself as the leader of the whole world's conversion to it. But if the upshot of this war should be that the great democracies like herself, France, and England, with all their superiority in numbers, wealth, and resources, were to find themselves outmatched by German autocratic power—if it left them in constant jeopardy and apprehension of a fresh attack upon their own existence—the result could hardly be other than a general backsliding among all nations from the principles of the American Constitution.

A community must have "safety first." Without that, all its progress in wealth, comfort, and refinement is only an accumulation of hostages to fortune. If your house is left without a roof, the more you fill it with furniture and treasures, the greater the ruin that you are preparing for the day when the storm arrives. So, if democracy builds up the finest civilisation imaginable, but cannot make itself secure against the assaults of envious tyranny, it is only a "blind alley" from which the peoples that follow it will eventually have to turn back in tragedy and disillusionment.

If Democracy loses.

Defeat for the democratic nations to-day would mean a world-wide reaction towards the "strong" centralised type of government of which the Central Empires are the leading examples. It would mean that the principle of self-government had been weighed in the balances and found wanting; that the American "proposition" was

unworkable; that George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and the other national heroes of the United States were stamped as false prophets and builders of castles in the air. The war will decide in the world's eyes whether America has been worshipping truth or idols. Her acceptance of defeat—nay, her acceptance of any compromise that left the Prussian menace undestroyed—would involve a moral cataclysm reaching to the very roots of her existence.

We have thus two peremptory and burningly manifest reasons why America dare not let the war end in anything but victory. In her passion for peace and her faith in democracy she has staked "Americanism" itself upon the issue. And she has begun to realise that there is something else involved which is bound up not less closely with the articles of her national faith. America is pre-eminently a nation of workers, confident in their moral right to the fruit of their labours. No country is prouder of its industrial capacity or more bound up in its industrial ambitions. The passion of work is idealised, and an endless fascination is found in the vision of achievement. America believes in the "career open" to toil and talent. If the French soldier of the Revolution was said to carry a Marshal's bâton in his knapsack, the American workman feels that he has a railway presidentship in his tool-basket. There is no American who does not believe that the community of free workers of which he forms a part will create by its industry and trade the fullest, richest, and most perfect life that the world has ever seen. And while the figure of the individual free worker has been consecrated by the Civil War and its abolition of slavery, America's conception of her own career as a free-working nation has made her accept that as the standard of national right for every other community of human beings.

"Americanism" at Stake.

Across this prospect of honourable and fruitful creative toil she now sees stretched the looming barrier of German blackmail, greed, and oppression. It strikes her that in the whole body of German propaganda there is not a word of recognition for the rights of non-German

peoples—for their rights of property any more than for their rights of liberty. On the contrary, the whole German programme and German practice reek of appropriation and toll-taking, of reaping where others have sowed, of the desire to make the world tributary to German coffers. The German dream is that the whole outer circle of humanity shall toil in subjection to Germany. The Kaiser has openly proclaimed the doctrine that no diplomatic question shall be settled in any part of the world without German intervention. But the creed is not less intensely held that no human labour shall flourish anywhere that is not subordinated to Germany's enrichment. The old issue of slavery stands revived in a new form, and the recognition of this is the most striking feature of President Wilson's recent utterances. The German Government, he points out, was not satisfied with the fair commercial field in which such remarkable successes had been gained.

The Slavery issue.

> "All the while there was lying behind its thought, in its dream of the future, a political control which would enable it in the long run to dominate the labour and industry of the world. They were not content with success by superior achievement; they wanted success by authority."

The traces of this slave-holding ambition—this conception of economic supremacy based on force—are to be found in every sphere of German policy. The President mentioned its deliberate attempt before the war to kill the industries of other nations by subsidised "dumping," and he explained to American workmen the real significance of the Berlin-Baghdad scheme:—

> "The Berlin-to-Baghdad Railway was constructed in order to bring a threat of force down the flank of the industrial undertakings of half-a-dozen other countries, so that when German competition came in it would not be resisted too far—because there was always the possibility of getting German armies into the heart of the country quicker than other armies could be got there."

He might have added to these illustrations the octopus

grip which Germany had secured of Italian finance through her control of the leading banks, and which she used either to stimulate or depress Italian industries according as they did or did not bring grist to the German mill. "Germany," to quote once more from the President of Cornell University, "has proclaimed equally in practice and in theory that the world is her oyster and she will open it."

But it is since the war began that the black flag of slavery and spoliation has been flown with an insolence which defies misinterpreting. Germany deliberately seeks to ruin the future livelihood of the nations with whom she is at war, even when her acts of destruction can serve no belligerent purpose. It is not only mere looting—in which she has surpassed all records of infamy—but a calculated crippling of her rivals in the future competition of peace and industry. She cuts down the fruit trees in the districts she is compelled to evacuate in France. She sinks the shipping of neutrals, in order that her own mercantile marine at the end of the war may have a greater command of the Transport Trade. She strips Belgium of every kind of plant and machinery that can be useful to herself.

Meanwhile, in the countries to which her conquest has extended, the regime of slavery is in full swing. The Belgian people are driven into gangs of forced labour—husbands torn from their wives, and children from their parents, just as in the days when negroes were sold like cattle for the plantations, and made to work in semi-starvation and under the most callous brutality for the strengthening of Germany's hold upon their own country.

A people in chains.

But these things are only a foretaste of the prospect of plunder and tyranny that opens to the exultant vision of the German mind. We are not confined to any one section of opinion for the exposition of this Gospel of Greed—this programme of general servitude to the race of "supermen.' It is no monopoly of the military and official classes; it is avowed with equal brazenness among the industrialists and the "intellectuals."

Take, as a first example, the "Petition to the Imperial Chancellor by the Six Great Economic Associations"—as

A Syllabus of Robbery.

complacent a syllabus of robbery as could be imagined. It describes how the natural resources of enemy countries are to be appropriated, while their inhabitants are left without any political rights whatever:—

> "The Belgian railways and waterways must become part of the German transport system . . . At the same time, the industrial undertakings and landed properties which are so important for dominating the country must be transferred from Belgian to German hands, and arrangements must be made which ensure that the inhabitants of the country will obtain no political influence upon the German Empire."
>
> "By acquiring the line of the Meuse and the French coast of the Channel, Germany would obtain not only the ore deposits of Briey . . . but also the coal districts of the Department du Nord and of the Department Pas-de-Calais . . . It may be considered a matter of course that the population of the annexed French territory will not be allowed to obtain political influence in Germany, and that here also the important economic factors, including large and medium-sized properties, will be placed in German hands, while France should undertake to receive and to indemnify the original owners."

The German Government, it should be mentioned, became alarmed at the naked avarice of this manifesto being revealed in foreign countries, and forbade its newspaper publication. It was not successful, however, in concealing the text of the document or that of the famous "Petition of the Professors," which it suppressed while still in the course of signature. That remarkable production (which was subscribed by 352 professors and head teachers, 148 judges and barristers and 145 burgomasters and higher civil officials) dots the i's and strokes the t's of the business men's cupidity with true academic scrupulosity. Its signatories are for all that the industrialists demand, and a good deal more. Of France, they declare that "we must enfeeble that land politically and economically, without scruple or compunction." "It is necessary that France should have imposed upon it a

Without Scruple.

high war indemnity and that no mercy should be shown to it." As for this country, "should we be in the position of exacting an indemnity from England . . . no amount of money that could be exacted would be sufficiently large."

Although the professors do not go into figures, the omission is supplied by a pamphlet which has been distributed among German troops by order of the War Office and the Commander-in-Chief and which elaborates a complete system of extortion. This sets forth how Germany's whole War Debt is to be apportioned among the Allies, the seizure of Belgian railways and mines, French railways, coal-mines and iron deposits, Russian lands, Roumanian oil-wells and so forth, being carefully detailed, with their respective valuations—not forgetting "enemy merchant navies" and the Suez Canal. But when all these have been reckoned up, it is found that there still remains a deficit of £6,000,000,000, and it is explained that this must be made good by unpaid imports from the Allied countries. The pamphlet calculates that an annual tribute in this form to the extent of £600,000,000 to £750,000,000 must be paid to Germany "for a number of years" to compensate her for the trouble and expense of dragging Europe into war. That is to say that the civilised nations are to become the slaves of Germany and pour into her coffers the product of their unrewarded toil. The world is to be organised on the basis of a ruling race surrounded by serf races, the function of the latter being to produce wealth for the aggrandisement of their over-lords.

The Two Ideals.

America, then, sees her ideal of a peaceful working democracy confronted by the aspiration of a bellicose, plundering tyranny, and she understands that it is a conflict which only victory or defeat can solve. Two such contradictory gospels cannot co-exist in the same world. It is the issue of the Civil War—the issue of Freedom or Slavery—revived again in all its glaring significance. President Wilson endorses this aspect of the case when he says:—

> "Any man in America or anywhere else who supposes that the free industry and enterprise of the

world can continue if the Pan-German plan is achieved and German power fastened upon the world is as fatuous as the dreamers of Russia."

The Voice of Labour.

American labour has, therefore, had the truth conspicuously placed before it that in its loyal prosecution of the war industries it is, in the most literal sense, "working out its own salvation." That it grasps the case, we may feel assured by the utterances of men like Mr. Gompers, who has been President of the American Federation of Labour ever (with the intermission of one year) since 1882. What Mr. Gompers says on behalf of that vast organisation of wage-earners is this:—

> "We have decided to render every service we can in order to win this war. . . . Much as the American Labour Movement abhors war, and heartily as it would welcome a cessation of hostilities, it is convinced that peace cannot come, and ought not to come, until the militarist and Imperialist policy of Prussia and of the German Government shall have been put an end to for all time. . . . The policy of Pacifism is nothing more nor less than playing into the hands of, and carrying out the policy of, the German Government."

So strongly is this conviction held that the American Federation repudiates any idea of conference not only with the representatives of German labour, but even with the delegates of the diminutive Socialist Party of the United States, which is tainted with Pacifist sentiments.

What America sees in Germany, then, is the champion of War, Tyranny and Slavery, and the ruthless antagonist of her own watchwords of Peace, Democracy and Free Labour. Her devotion to those ideals is the moral guarantee underlying and reinforcing all the pledges of her statesmen for her perseverance to the end. She has realised what the German temper and the German ambition mean, and how futile all her own visions must remain until these are plucked up by the root.

There is only one vital question left to examine, and

it is this—does America fully realise what she is undertaking when she pledges herself to the extirpation of this malign power and to the deliverance of mankind from its further menace? Has she reckoned the price of "making the world safe for democracy"? Does she understand where the foundations of the German strength are laid, or will she be liable to be hoodwinked into some kind of peace which would ostensibly achieve her purpose but actually leave the inner resources of Prussianism undisturbed?

Upon her readiness to do her utmost, there is no need to produce detailed evidence. What she has already done in the calling out of men, in the provision of money, in the marshalling of her industry and agriculture for the Allies' service, speaks for itself. The most generous and loyal comradeship is revealed in every act of her administration. The sole point on which a cautious onlooker might still have entertained doubts is whether her insight would detect all that is required for the overthrow of Prussianism, or whether she might imagine the work to be accomplished when, as a matter of fact, the evil had only been abridged and left with the power and hope of eventual recovery.

The Root of German Power.

To us in Europe it is plain enough that half of Germany's strength lies in her domination of Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey, whose servile Governments have converted their populations into ready "cannon-fodder" for the masters in Berlin. We may drive the German armies out of France and Belgium, but we shall never have the realities of peace and safety until the peoples of Central and South-Eastern Europe gain their moral emancipation and the Prussian writ ceases to run in the Chancelleries of Vienna, Sofia and Constantinople—through the plains of Hungary, across the Balkans and to the farther confines of Asia Minor. But can America realise this, in her remoteness from the facts of European life and politics? Will she feel that her work has been accomplished when the U-boat has been suppressed, when France has been delivered and Belgium avenged? Will she stand by us in "making

a complete job of it" by cutting the links that unite Berlin with Baghdad and depriving the War-Lords of their great reservoir of alien soldiery and labour? The explicitness with which these questions have been answered by President Wilson is the most striking feature of his Buffalo address and the most conclusive assurance that there is no hidden flaw in America's co-operation with the Allies. His words are clear and emphatic:—

The "Black Bulk."

> "Look at the map of Europe now. Germany is thrusting upon us again and again the discussion of peace. Talks about what? Talks about Belgium, talks about Northern France, talks about Alsace-Lorraine. Well, those are deeply interesting subjects to us and to them, but they are not talking about the heart of the matter. Take the map and look at it. Germany has absolute control of Austria-Hungary, practical control of the Balkan States, control of Turkey, control of Asia Minor. I saw a map in which the whole thing was printed in appropriate black the other day, and black stretched all the way from Hamburg to Baghdad—a bulk of German power inserted into the heart of the world. If she can keep that, she has kept all that her dreams contemplated when the war began."

What that declaration means is that, just as the statesmen, the thinkers and the workers of America are united in the crusade of liberty, so is her intelligence wedded with her energy in its prosecution. In the attainment of her purpose she will not be deceived any more than she will be denied.

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